

The Meaning and Method of Charity

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Sermon preached at the opening of the National Conference of Catholic Charities meeting at Cincinnati. Text republished from the Catholic Telegraph (Cincinnati), for October 11, 1934.

THE Twentieth Convention of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, which we open here in St. Peter's Cathedral this morning, has a greater than political significance. We are not concerned with the question of laying down a new program for the relief of Catholics who are in need of help; nor of revising, fundamentally, our methods of administering and dispensing Catholic charity. For program and method and statesmanship, and the science of sociology, and all things temporal that may be considered in connection with charity, are of secondary importance to the Catholic mind.

For us, charity is a Divine law, the supreme law. It is a Christian virtue, the highest virtue, by which a man is made to share in the very life of God Himself. It is so essentially connected with our concept of religion that its negation is the denial of the Christ whom we adore as the Incarnate Son of God and from whom we take our way of life. Our fundamental interest, accordingly, is the basic issue of nourishing the flame of charity in our own hearts and of reflecting its light and warmth throughout the land.

For this reason your Convention, my dear brethren, is being opened with an act of religion, the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Pope Pius XI, the reigning Vicar of the Lord Christ, stands in our midst in the person of the Papal Delegate, who officiates at the altar as our High Priest. The Apostolic College of the American Hierarchy is represented here by many of the archbishops and bishops of the United States. Under the headship of these consecrated leaders, we priests and lay folk are sharing in the celebration of these sacred mysteries to remind ourselves, at the very outset of the Convention, that we are being motivated in terms of spiritual values. Not philanthropy,

nor sympathy, nor pity, are measures of our aspirations or the terms of our effort.

Because we Catholics know and believe that there is a personal God, and because we profess Jesus Christ as His Only-Begotten Son, Divine as well as human, we are able to accept the law of charity as the primary norm of our lives. This God whom we adore as our Creator tells us, through Christ the Lord, that the first commandment is to love Him supremely and that the second law is to love all human beings even as we love ourselves. It is plain that God wishes to be loved as the common Father of mankind and that His universal Paternity requires us to love all persons, along with ourselves, as His children.

So long, therefore, as there is want and suffering in the world, whether it be physical or spiritual, the true Christian must be inflamed with a desire to relieve it. His charity must overleap the barriers of mountains and seas. It must reach every human being, irrespective of color or country. For Almighty God bases His law of love on our common origin. This body, through which I feel and act, is of the same elemental clay that was modeled by the Divine hand into the members of the first man. The blood stream that pulses in your veins had its source in the veins of the first man in the Garden of Eden. We have a common capacity for pleasure and we share a capacity for pain that is almost limitless. In a word, the human race comprises one family, which is God's family.

But there is a bond that ties us to each other even more securely than this link of our common nature. We have a destiny that is eternal. And that destiny,—of living everlastingly with God in heaven,—is the true measure of our value and dignity as human beings. To make it possible for each of us to arrive at that destiny, God Himself became man in the person of Jesus Christ. In order to raise us to Himself, God reached down to the level of our own weak nothingness. He took unto Himself our very human nature. He clothed the poor nakedness of Adam's children with the royal robe of His own divinity.

Do you see, my friends, the tremendous social significance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? In the light of these premises, which we Catholics hold as dogmas of faith and principles of living, it is easy to understand why the Master

identifies Himself with those who are hungry and naked and forsaken. He is the Divine Elder Brother of the panting, sweating coolie of China as well as the Saviour of the powerfully complacent Western industrialist. The human being as such, the human soul as such, no matter by what name it is called or where it lives, is the great concern of Christ. Because every soul is a spiritual substance that can not die, Christ could justly place a value on it that staggers the mind. "What shall it profit a man," He cried out, "if he gain the whole world and lose his soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul"?

Accordingly, my brethren, the conclusion to which I am trying to lead you is simply that, for us Catholics, there can be no charity without Christ. His Gospel is the all-sufficing Magna Charta of human rights. It is the only guarantee of human security. It alone is a premise on which to predicate a worthy value of life in the individual person. It is all of this for the simple reason that it proclaims the necessity of nourishing and revering the human body because of the soul, and of loving both body and soul in the individualized human personality as a child of God and a brother of Jesus Christ.

This, my dear delegates, is the doctrinal basis for your discussions during these days of the Convention. These are the high principles that must support the norms of action which you formulate. The crucifixes on our altars and those dangling from the beads in your pockets will help you to orientate your course from hour to hour and from day to day. Look on them frequently. Grasp them reverently. For, greater love hath no man than that a man should lay down his life for his friends.

For two thousand years the Catholic Church has charted the way of life on the latitude and longitude of the love of God and the love of man. Her children are the heirs of the glorious tradition which the Church has established and of the repository of her gigantic experience. The charity of the Christians shone out with a mighty vitality in the apostolic times and during the ages of the persecutions, and if you are mindful of this early glory of the Church, you will speak fearlessly, even today, about the doctrine of the stewardship of wealth.

Recalling the writings and the sermons of the Fathers

during the centuries after Constantine, you will dare, even here, where the Church is free and respected, to sound the challenge of social responsibility. You will not hesitate to threaten the modern extortioner and chiseler by fixing on him the opprobrious names of robber and thief, which the early Fathers of the Church used to condemn those of their own time who refused to share superfluous wealth with the suffering and the needy.

And, instead of hanging your heads in apology before the prejudiced and libelous attacks on the medieval charity of the Church, your eyes will blaze a challenge and your tongue will tell the glory of the respect and honor with which simple labor was invested by those Ages of Faith. You will grasp the transcendental sweetness and the humaneness of the charity that informed medieval monasticism, and you will incorporate those qualities with methods that are most modern and daring in the twentieth century practice of the virtue.

Of the many thousands of her consecrated members who have dedicated their lives to an exemplification of Christ's charity in the religious societies and orders of the Church, much could be said. They are the glory of the Church in this modern day. They demonstrate in terms of the highest personal sacrifice how profound, how high, how all-embracing, is the charity of Christ as the Church knows it.

In thus paying honor to the members of the religious orders whose saintly lives have been as torches of light in the Christian past, we make the claim that the Catholic Church was the first to recognize the purpose and to formulate the methods of that which is called modern organized charity. The work of Vives, the Catholic theologian of the early sixteenth century, and the adoption of his ordinances by the Catholic cities of Germany and the Netherlands, enable us to prove this prerogative historically and justly. The Blessed Frederick Ozanam, revered by hundreds in this Cathedral and by tens of thousands throughout the land as their guide and spiritual father in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, though he lived three centuries after Vives and almost in our own times, was yet a pioneer in the field of organized charity.

It is to Frederick Ozanam that we owe the first formula-

tion of many of our principles of modern charity work,—our case investigation, specific treatment, self-help, record keeping and policies of cooperative administration. Ozanam's work, in the year 1833, antedates by almost two decades the appearance of any other study in the field of modern charity, and the great society which he founded is almost a quarter of a century older than any other charitable organization using modern methods.

On you, his spiritual sons in this great Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who invariably and rightfully occupy the place of prominence in these annual Conventions, the Church relies strongly for a manifestation of the power of religion through charity. As lay members of the mystical body of Christ, you are expected to exemplify the charity of the Divine Head that must give life and direction to us all. Yours the vocation to demonstrate the charity of Christ in the world of men. And you must do this even if sometimes you feel unequal to the task.

You must not surrender the ideal even if you sense yourselves to be weak and ineffectual in your missions of mercy. For, like a great magnifying lens, Christ will gather up and focus the thin rays of your individual works of charity into a point of fire that is hotter and more brilliant than the flame of an oxygen blow torch. The coldness of the world, the selfishness of men and their tragic indifference to the rights of those who suffer will melt in the warmth of your love even as ice turns to water under the influence of the sun.

And if this be the challenge of charity addressed to our lay folk by Holy Mother Church, what, my brother priests, shall we say of her expectations in our regard? You especially, the Diocesan Directors of Charities in the hundred ecclesiastical jurisdictions of the land, are the vicars of your bishops in their stupendous calling of disbursing the charity of Christ. You are the almoners of the Church. Because of your official positions, you are the consecrated instruments and channels of charity in the Church of God. You are her liaison officers for Catholic Action in the field of Catholic Charity.

Like the Tenth Legion of Cæsar, perennially youthful and gloriously strong because of the endless drafting of those from other legions who had seen their comrades die in

action, your company must never falter. In your hearts must be nourished the undying opposition that is shared by Christ and His Church to every form of oppression and every source of misery. As commissioned officers of apostolic leaders, you must prosecute the attack on the social causes of every form of distress. For to present a callous front in the presence of suffering, to reject the rightful claims of even one of the ten millions still engulfed by the desolation and tragic discouragement of abject poverty, is nothing less than the negation of the Lord Christ. And no indictment more criminal than this can possibly be formulated by the Christian mind with which to stigmatize the recent manifestations of selfish greed in behalf of industry and business.

All of us, my brethren, have tasted the bitterness of suffering. Life is full of it, because, almost in the day of his creation, man despoiled his nature of the glorious happiness with which he was invested. To restore that primal integrity, Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, became a suffering man. Even His mother, whom we revere as the source of all our blessings in and through Christ, is loved most by us under the title of Sorrowful Mother. She gladly identified herself with the Man of Sorrows because she loved Him supremely; and, to share unreservedly in His mission of redemption, she became, for our sakes, the Queen of Martyrs. To be embraced in the circle of their friendship, all of us must submit to the Divine dispensation of sharing their vocation and their manner of life. That is what St. Paul meant when he said that we are all one with Christ and members of a body that is vitalized and directed by Him as its Head.

If hunger for bread or thirst devastates a single member of that body, the pain and the death is felt most keenly by its Head. Therefore, Christ could say: "Blessed are ye, possess the Kingdom, for I was hungry and you gave Me to eat." If greed or crime denude so much as a single member of that holy body, its Head could say, and He did say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, for I was naked and you clothed Me not." Companionship with Christ or everlasting rejection is conditioned, therefore, simply and irrevocably, on the love of God and the love of mankind. Both loves are sublimated in the single, simple word of "charity."

There are many obscure passages, my dear brethren, in the word of God that challenge the teaching office of the Church and the rich genius of her most gifted saints and theologians. But the word and the meaning of "charity" is not one of them. Its need is so obvious, its function in the Christian dispensation so fundamental, that the very words used by the Master can be grasped, two thousand years after their utterance, by the humblest mind. Poets and philosophers find God in the depths of the waters and in the height of the mountains; those of us less gifted can find Him more quickly and grasp him more securely, through Jesus Christ, in the love and service of our fellowmen.

Catholic Charities

THE MOST REVEREND AMLETO GIOVANNI CICOGNANI

Apostolic Delegate to the United States

Address delivered at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities held at Cincinnati. Reprinted from the Catholic Telegraph (Cincinnati), October 11, 1934.

THE solemnity of these annual meetings is not merely an external one, marking a great assemblage, but a spontaneous expression of the high purpose of Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. These meritorious associations deserve greater appreciation and wider expansion.

Theology teaches us that the Divine Essence is charity, and that the formal love that we have for our neighbor is a participation to a certain degree in that charity. The divinely imposed duty of these two noble associations, Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul—a duty which they daily perform—is to carry on and to expand their work through the devoted efforts of many priests, Sisters and laymen and women of every walk in life. The personnel of these associations is as varied as are the spiritual and temporal needs of the thousands, and even millions, of their beneficiaries.

Well-developed charity is founded on a certain super-

natural communication. He who exercises charity does not exhaust his resources, but develops an ever-increasing capacity for his work. This indicates its origin, namely, God, virtue—Infinite Charity! Charity knows how to order to its own ends the gifts and activities of mind and heart; whence it not only appears to be, but is the mother of all virtues. The object of charity is the object of God—His goodness and His love. As Holy Writ says: "God is charity; and he that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him." The object, therefore, of Catholic Charities and of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and their action attains to God Himself. Thus some idea of their sublime excellence can be grasped. To unite creatures to God, and to unite to Him benefactors and beneficiaries in the most august and divine bond of charity, is to cooperate with Our Lord in His Divine Providence. It is to exercise a holy rivalry with our limited means; it is to place at His disposition, for His purposes, that which we have received from Him, our gifts and our personal endowments, namely, mind and heart, physical and moral energy and material possessions, which after all are His gifts. God so enriches us, His creatures, that we may help and perfect the human family—which is the divine family—of which we are members. I repeat—this is a divine work!

A good work may attract us by its beauty; but it may discourage us by reason of its vastness. The energies of man are limited. He is restricted in his views and in his means. The needs of man, however, are numberless and are ever increasing. This is manifest if one considers only one country.

But the Church has shown us how to be useful to our fellowmen, to our country, in a word, to all. In her marvelous organization she wisely directs the activities of her children and encourages their development for the welfare of all her members. We know that the tissues of the human body are made up of tiny cells, and that when every cell, even the smallest, is healthy and active, the entire body functions perfectly. The part, or even the whole, depends upon the little, or even the least, part. And so in the little things of life, even the least things, we can and must do our part that the divine work of charity may be accomplished.

The Church, a visible society, in making possible, prac-

tical, easy and efficacious her moral and religious assistance has established an external and legal bond between priest and people—between a particular priest and the people of a specified territory. It has united one to the other by means of reciprocal rights and duties in an entity that is called a parish; and this *de facto* entity has an importance that is not only ecclesiastical but likewise civil and social. The parish priest is that moral person to whom is entrusted a parish. He has the obligation of the cure of souls, which is to be exercised under the authority of his bishop. The parish is a defined part of a diocese, with its particular people and its own church, over which presides a priest, as pastor, charged with the necessary cure of the souls of that jurisdiction. This organization set up gives a priest charged with the obligations of a spiritual father; a priest who is in contact with his people, who is in a position to know their needs, to instruct them in their religious duties and to instil into them moral and civil precepts. I include civil precepts because the love of country, as that of one's family and one's neighbor, is part of the sublime precept of Christian charity.

Would that the faithful of every parish could grasp the mind of the Church, be animated by her motives and carry out her magnificent program! This would be a sublime expression of Faith, an irrefutable defense of her position as a divinely organized society. Such parochial organization would in a short time effect a moral betterment, the reaction of which could not fail to exercise a widespread influence for the temporal well-being of society.

The parish offers great opportunities. It is governed by a spiritual father solicitous for the welfare of the family committed to his keeping. He knows his parishioners, and through his zealous ministration, it is not difficult for them to know one another. As a kind father, he takes note of those who are in need and strives to provide for them, or at least to give them some measure of assistance.

The word "neighbor," which we have learned from Our Lord Himself, embraces all and excludes absolutely no member of the human family. But in order that the teaching of Christ shall not remain unfruitful, or merely theoretical, the parish presents it to us, in a definite way, as a family spirit through which the fulfilment of the precept of charity

is rendered easy within parish limits. Applying the thought of St. Jerome, we can say that we are not commanded to do arduous things, which to us may offer serious difficulties; we are not told: "Go to the East and seek charity; sail toward the West and find love. Love is within our hearts."

No matter how the miseries of society may increase, we find that in a parish the number of the sick, of widows in need, of abandoned orphans, is limited. The parish priest has the obligation of keeping parochial registers, which historically, preceded the registers of State and city. While the poor in paganism remained in absolute isolation, as though abandoned by their gods, in Christianity they have found a definite place in the parish register and in the heart of the pastor, no distinction being made between the rich and the poor. For the parish priest must heed the solemn injunction of the Divine Master: "As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me."

The means which the parish offers for the exercise of the works of charity are not chosen solely, nor chiefly, to make easy the labors of the pastor, but to promote the welfare of all the members of the parish. The priest, indeed, would have neither the time nor the means to satisfy the varied demands made on him within his territorial jurisdiction, because above all things he must interest himself in spiritual matters. For this reason the Church from the very beginning assigned to her deacons the performance of the works of charity. They had to render an account to the one who presided over a Christian community. They had to furnish a list of the poor and to make known the needs of each one; to give advice as to the most prudent distribution of alms; to receive the indigent and to visit them in the bosom of their families. All this is precisely the work which Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are carrying on.

I need not tell you that today deacons are dedicated to intensive study and a thorough preparation for the priesthood in our seminaries. Their work, however, must still be carried on by all good Christians who are able to exercise their apostolate.

The deacons had norms to enable them to perform their good work in an organized way within the limits of the community to which they belonged, and, as I have already

indicated, under the direction of the priest who presided over it.

There is no doubt whatever that those who carry on the work of Catholic Charities and of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are the true successors of the deacons of the early Church. Dedicated as they are to apostolic labors and working in harmony with their spiritual directors, they can be certain and assured that their apostolate bears the stamp of ecclesiastical approval, and is made stable by the norms of the Church which establish an intimate union with bishops and the Vicar of Christ.

While the faithful, in union with their parish priest, should with the most ardent zeal do their part in promoting personally, or with moral and material assistance, the works of Christian charity, they must realize that good works are not always confined to restricted limits. Persons, time or place must not hamper them. Besides the works of organized charity, others present themselves from time to time which the Christian heart can not fail to discern and for which it is constrained to provide. This is done according to circumstances, often in silence and with absolute secrecy, so that the help given is known only to our Heavenly Father, according to the Scriptural injunction, "that thy alms may be in secret, and the Father who seeth in secret will repay thee." Besides our particular center of charitable activity, there are others to which we are united by ties of brotherhood not less strong than those which bind us to the nearest neighbor of our parish. The laudable spirit binding us to our own parish and to our own associations must not make us ignore other noble movements of charity outside the parish, having greater scope. For this is as it should be. There are movements and associations which require a larger center, greater opportunities and facilities which are not possible everywhere. Often the benefits derived from such a center will contribute more or less to the advantage of particular parishes and their members. The pastors are grateful to the zealous promoters who in a spirit of sacrifice, going from place to place, offer their help in furthering a more fruitful and perfect parochial organization. Such movements through the concerted action of promoters and pastors become a part of the very life of the parish, giving it a broader outlook and a clearer

realization of their value. Thus it is that so many beautiful works are fostered by the Catholic Church—her charities, her missions, her culture. And these many works make manifest the multiplicity of the Church's needs.

In the same manner, bishops and the Sovereign Pontiff occasionally make appeals for definite purposes and request cooperation in matters which do not concern directly this or that parish. This is the marvelous power of the Catholic Church—that particular groups, often insignificant in numbers and in power, or even those dispersed in desert lands, through the charity of the Church become by reason of a potent bond universal in character. They take on the strength of a world-wide organization, sharing in its dignity and power.

We know that unity was one of the marks or characteristics by which Christ wished His Church to be distinguished throughout all the ages. The action of charity must bear the same mark. The parish and its activities unite the faithful and the clergy in an admirable way to the bishops whom the Holy Ghost has placed to rule the Church of Christ. They also unite them to the Sovereign Pontiff, who is the foundation stone of the divine edifice. This is unified action—Catholic Action: But it is important that we understand what unity means and what it does not mean. It signifies coordination, a harmonious and organic union. It certainly does not mean oneness in the sense of one thing or one function, which can become a concentration of power that is harmful and impossible. Nature and God have given us infinite variety, individuals and inanimate things attracting by their varied beauty and countless functions. Many scientists and modern industrialists who study not nature and God would standardize everything, giving us one thing instead of numberless things, as does nature.

Our spiritual needs are many; the needs of temporal life are many; those in want are likewise many. We must be prepared, therefore, to find in the divine organization of the Church a multiplicity of activities and movements. These must not be impeded. They should go on without clashing, without the dissipation or duplication of effort. They should flourish harmoniously. They should, in a word, be coordinated in Catholic Action, according to the oft-repeated injunction of our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI.

The world today is concerned only with its material problems. The Church is interested in these also, but because her sphere is eternity and her mission the saving of immortal souls, she coordinates all this to the Supreme Good. In this coordination she finds the fulness of life; in it she exercises charity, which is the bond of perfection, and perfection is the likeness of an all-provident God, of God our Redeemer!

In the plan of Divine Providence, our cooperation is presupposed. And so there is need of our cooperation in the work of Divine Redemption, which frees the conscience from the faults due to the frailty of human nature and wipes out the hideous stains of sin. There should be cooperation not only to hold intact but ever to make larger the family of the Lord Christ, which is founded on an all-embracing charity. "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this—to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulations; and to keep one's self unspotted from this world." One of the proofs of the divinity of Christ given by St. Augustine is the brotherhood in which His followers must be united—a brotherhood that is not limited simply to sharing earthly advantages, but one that is raised to a supernatural plane where it breathes the very atmosphere of God Himself.

In conclusion, may the twenty-second annual National Conference of Catholic Charities mark a strengthening of activity in the Catholic charity of the nation. May it mark a multiplication of the branches of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which even at present carries on its fruitful apostolate in more than 2,000 parishes in America. May the coming year record a greater number of parishes establishing their own branches of the society.

Charity! Your name and your purpose belong in an eminent degree to the Church and to her life. St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of St. John, the Apostle of Charity, in his letters designated the Church in a single word—Charity! And with this name he likewise designated every diocese and every Christian community. Thus he proclaimed that which must be the very soul of every Christian center. May every community, every parish, every diocese, deserve to be designated by the divine name—Charity!

The Charter of Catholic Charity

HON. ALFRED E. SMITH

Conclusion of an address delivered in Cincinnati at the National Conference of Catholic Charities. Reprinted from the Catholic Telegraph for October 11, 1934.

AT the Conference of Catholic Charities last October in New York, a charter was drawn up and that charter enunciated the principle, "Charity is a divine mandate. The relief of distress has ever been an essential part of the mission of the Catholic Church. We can, therefore, never think of turning over our entire responsibility to the State or to any other agency. It must continue to give the people an opportunity for participating in works of charity under its own leadership."

Now that brings us down to just what we are out here for. It is all right to cooperate with the Government; we can help, we can encourage, but in the last analysis it is the work of the Church and by all the authority which the Church gives, a divine mandate, by the authority of Our Lord Himself. When the priest reads the Gospel and you pray to God the Father, what do you say? You say to Him, it is not the priest that is talking to me; it is not Thy interpreter, it is Thy Divine Son, and He tells me there is no room in the Kingdom of Heaven for those that are neglectful of the poor, the weak, the sick and the afflicted.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew tells us that one day Our Lord came out of the temple and He sat down on the side of a hill and His disciples gathered around Him to have a conference with Him. He was the leader, they wanted to get some advice and some suggestions from Him. They wanted to know what they were to tell the people. So Our Divine Lord, being not only the greatest teacher, but also the greatest prophet that the world has ever known, He taught them by prophecy and He prophesied to them what would happen on the last day, when He said that the kingdom would gather the righteous to His right hand side.

By the kingdom he meant Himself. And He prophesied that He would turn to the multitude on His right hand side and say to them, "When I was thirsty you gave Me to

drink; when I was naked you clothed Me; when I was in prison you visited Me," and then He prophesied that He would inspire the multitude to ask Him the question, "Lord, when were You hungry; when were You thirsty; when were You naked; and when were You in prison?" And then He prophesied that He would point to the poor, the weak, the sick and the afflicted, and say to the multitude, "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these you have done it unto Me."

Now, let us analyze that. What do you say when you want a favor for a friend? It does not mean anything to you, but you are interested in this man and you want to do something for him. You say: "Here is my friend, anything that you can do for him is a personal favor to me." So, consequently, Our Divine Lord says to us today, "Here are My orphan children, here are My sick, here are My poor, My weak and My afflicted. Anything that you do for them is a personal favor to Me."

What an opportunity. What an opportunity. Is there anybody in the world today that does not need that favor? Nobody, only the people that don't think they need it and they are the ones that need it the most.

St. James in his universal epistle spoke of alms-giving and charity, and referred to them as good works, and said, "Faith without good works is dead." What good is a dead faith? I have thought it all over and I have come to the conclusion that it is the same thing as the second hand in a game of poker. You would be better off if you had nothing. You would be, because you are bound to lose, when it comes to a show-down.

Dark-skinned men and women born into savage, man-eating tribes of cannibals in the heart of Africa, are infinitely better off than a Catholic man or a Catholic woman that will be found walking around through a civilized community with a dead faith. A cannibal knows no light, human or divine. He never heard of the crib of Bethlehem; he never heard of the Garden of Gethsemane; he knows nothing of what took place on the porch of the palace of Pilate.

No one ever explained to him why the sun refused to shine at three o'clock in the afternoon on Good Friday when was consummated the greatest tragedy in the history of the world. But yet the Divine Lord will forgive the cannibal

on exactly the same ground and for the same reason that He asked the Father to forgive them when He was on the Cross because they did not know any better. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Well, that is fine for the cannibal. He is all right, but what about us? Nobody can make that excuse for us. Nobody can beg forgiveness in our behalf on any ground or upon any theory that we do not know better, because we do know better. We have been taught better since the days that we walked up for our First Holy Communion, and our Holy Mother, the Church, pursuing her object on earth, the salvation of souls has from the very day of her organization by the Divine Lord Himself right down to this hour and minute preached to us always the absolute necessity for practical charity in order that we, her children, may on the last day be found on that right-hand side, and hear from the lips of Our Lord Himself, "Inasmuch as you have done it for these the poorest of My people, you have done it to Me. Come ye, therefore, and possess with Me the kingdom prepared for us by Our Father from the beginning of time."

What Is the Moral Law?

*An editorial published in the Catholic Medical Guardian
(London), April, 1934.*

THIS important subject is such a source of puzzlement to many people, especially to those outside the Church, that we trust the following clear exposition will help to a better understanding.

First, what is a law"?—A law is regulation of order or conduct laid down by competent authority to be obeyed by rational subjects. *Such law belongs to the moral order*, and involves the duty on man's part of obedience. In the true sense of the word, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, law is a rational decree or ordinance of the practical reason for the common good of Society promulgated by authority which has the care of the community. Its ultimate source is "*the Eternal law*," or the Divine Will commanding the order of nature to be observed, and prohibiting whatever is opposed to it. Accordingly, human judicial and municipal laws where these bind the conscience are founded on the Eternal law. The same Eternal law, in so far as it applies to human nature,

is made known to man through his reason, and is called "*the Natural law*." Accordingly, human conduct conformed to right reason is natural; and conduct opposed to right reason, even though it may appeal to the animal propensities of man's lower nature, is unnatural, precisely because it is contrary to the good of human nature.

Hence, when applied to the judgment of the rightness or wrongness of any human action in the ethical or moral sphere, this law is known as "*the Natural Moral law*"—or, more shortly, "the moral law," or "natural law."

But what about "*the Physical Law?*" Since law embodies an injunction laid upon rational beings, a physical law is not properly a law at all. It is a quality of matter, and is one of the essential properties of matter, and is called law only by analogy. Thus, the laws of cohesion, gravitation, chemical affinity, etc., are the constant accompaniments of matter under specific conditions. But density, visibility, transparency, etc., are other qualities of matter, but being variable are not called laws. Physical laws, then, manifest themselves in the succession of effects from causes in the case of material things. Since these are invariable under definite conditions, we regard them as a *physical necessity*, and call the resulting uniformity the manifestation of "laws of nature."

Laws are divided into *Divine* and *Human*... Divine law, so far as man is concerned, is either *Natural* as above explained, or *Positive*, which is promulgated by revelation.

Human law is *Ecclesiastical* when promulgated by the authority of the Church, which is derived from God; and *Municipal* or *Civil* when it is the ordinance of the Civil government.

The rules of conduct which right reason manifests to us, and which conscience, which is the herald of God, commands us to follow, constitute the Natural moral law. The objects, then, of the natural law are all those actions which *in themselves* are in accordance with right reason. They are good or evil, not merely because they are commanded or forbidden by lawful authority, but because *in themselves* they are obligatory or forbidden, because human nature is what it is. This is the ground of the well-known distinction between *mala in se* (intrinsic evil) and *mala quia prohibita* (evil because forbidden). The natural law, then, in itself and objectively is

universal and unchanging; *it binds all men at all times in all places.*

Yet, be it remembered, the natural law may be explained and reinforced by positive Divine law and ecclesiastical law—*e. g.*, by a Papal encyclical.

In applying these principles we judge the rightness or wrongness of such things as birth restriction or contraception, infanticide by abortion or surgical operation, sterilization or mutilation of innocent persons, suicide, euthanasia or the termination of the lives of incurables, and so forth.

Articles of Interest for the Month

- My Six Conversions. By G. K. Chesterton. *America*. October 27th.
 Is Materialism Our State Religion? By Dan W. Gilbert. *Catholic World*. October.
 The Peregrination of Authority. By Fergus Kernan. *Catholic World*. October.
 Liberty and Authority: A Political Essay. By Ross J. S. Hoffman. *The American Review*. October.
 What the Textile Workers Won. By Paul L. Blakely. *America*. October 6th.
 Collective Bargaining and Steel. By a Steel Worker. *America*. October 20th.
 Objection to a Minimum Wage. By Arthur E. Gleason, S.J. *America*. October 27th.
 Where Is the Money? By Gerhard Hirshfeld. *Commonweal*. October 5th.
 Are We on the Right Road? (Social Justice). By John A. Ryan. *Commonweal*. October 12th.
 What of the Consumer? By Richard L. Mayer. *Commonweal*. October 26th.
 Tolpuddle and Its Moral (Trade Union Movement). By John Quinlan. *Month*. October.
 The Catholic Worker. By Norman McKenna. *Month*. October.
 Now Enters the Chameleon. By Charles Willis Thompson. *Sign*. October.
 The Fatuity of Strikes. *Irish Rosary*. September.
 The Communist Advance on the Cultural Front. By G. M. Godden. *Catholic World*. October.
 Russia Enters the League. By John LaFarge, S.J. *America*. October 6th.
 The Soviet Experiment Reappraised. By John LaFarge, S.J. *America*. October 27th.
 New Communist Campaign Among American Women. By G. M. Godden. *America*. October 20th.
 Mussolini and Hitler: A Parallel and a Contrast. By Sir George Shee. *Tablet* (London). September 8th.
 The German Lutheran Struggle. By Kurt F. Reinhardt. *Commonweal*. October 12th.

- Dr. Dollfuss and Msgr. Seipel. By C. F. Melville. *Dublin Review*. October.
- Von Papen and the German Catholics. By Leo J. Stanley. *Dublin Review*. October.
- Catholic Youth in Spain. By James A. Magner. *America*. October 20th.
- Priests and People in Catholic Spain. By Hubert Becher, S.J. *Irish Monthly*. October.
- These Days in Spain. By James A. Magner. *Commonweal*. October 5th.
- Changing China. By Thomas F. Ryan, S.J. *Irish Monthly*. October.
- Chosen People—The Jews. By Lord French. *Irish Rosary*. September.
- Some Recent Tributes to Ireland. By Stephen J. Brown, S.J. *Irish Rosary*. October.
- Some Customs of Catholic England. By Mabel Williams. *Irish Rosary*. October.
- States Rights and Divorce. By John Gilland Brunini. *Commonweal*. October 19th.
- Another World's Fair. By John A. Toomey, S.J. *America*, October 13th.
- Our Lost Sense of Wonder. By John A. Crealy. *Irish Rosary*. September.
- Spiritualism for the Masses. By Herbert Thurston. *Month*. October.
- The Dichotomy of George Santayna. By James W. Lane. *Catholic World*. October.
- Catholic Publicity Again. By Ed. Willmann. *Commonweal*. October 26th.
- Sentimentality and the Screen. Mirian R. Flaherty. *Commonweal*. October 5th.
- Mopping Up the Movies. By George Zimpfer. *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*. October.
- History Falsified By Omission. By Hilaire Belloc. *America*. October 6th.
- Crusaders Past and Present. By William Thomas Walsh. *Columbia*. November.
- Cruise of the Grace of God. By Irving T. McDonald. *Columbia*. November.
- St. Ignatius at Montmartre. By Herbert Thurston. *Irish Quarterly Review*, September.
- St. Thomas of Canterbury's Opposition to Henry II. By Rev. W. R. Lillie, S.J. *Clergy Review*. October.
- Richard Topcliffe, Priest-Hunter and Torturer. By Rev. Sir John O'Connell. *Dublin Review*. October.
- Lisieux: Three Impressions. By Rev. Benedict Williamson. *Tablet* (London). September 8th.
- This Year's Passion Play. By Edythe H. Brown. *Commonweal*. September 21st.
- Some Lessons of the International Eucharistic Congresses. By C. C. Martindale, S.J. *Dublin Review*. October.
- A Christian in Palestine. By Ian R. MacFarlane. *Commonweal*. October 26th.

- Francis Patrick Kenrick, Type and Pattern of American Churchman. By Rev. Francis E. Tourscher, O.S.A. *Ecclesiastical Review*. October.
- Our First Native Born Priest. By Thomas F. Meehan. *America*. October 13th.
- Maurice Francis Egan. By Michael Earls, S.J. *Catholic World*. October.
- The Divine Comedy. By Robert Sencourt. *Dublin Review*. October.
- Drama in the Mediæval Church. By W. H. Shewring. *Dublin Review*. October.
- Approach to Style in Writing. By Francis Talbot, S.J. *America*. October 6th and 13th.
- Another Aid to Writers. By Ward Clarke. *America*. October 20th.
- The Priest As a Teacher. By Rev. John E. Graham. *Catholic Educational Review*. October.
- The Problem Boy and His Problem Parents. By Thomas A. Newsome. *Month*. October.
- Enthusiasm in Teaching. By John R. Biggans. *The Catholic School Journal*. November.
- Living Endowment (Education). By Andrew Corry. *Commonweal*. October 19th.
- Contacts and Tactics in Present Day Apologetics. By Francis A. Walsh, O.S.B. *Ecclesiastical Review*. November.
- Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. By Virgil Michel, O.S.B. *Orate Fratres*. October.
- Concerning the Origin of Popular Devotion. By Michael Ducey, O.S.B. *Orate Fratres*. October.
- Unreasonable Services! By Gerald Vann, O.P. *Month*. October.
- Service in the Church Militant. By John T. O'Connor. *Ave Maria*. September 29th.
- A Heretic Avoid (Non-Catholic Service). By Rev. E. J. Mahoney, D.D. *Clergy Review*. October.
- Catholic Physicians and the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. By William Schaefer. *Ecclesiastical Review*. November.
- Insincere Ante-Nuptial Guarantees. By Charles E. Park. *Ecclesiastical Review*. November.
- Procedure Law of the Code. By Stanislaus Woyod, O.F.M. *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*. October.
- Scriptural School. By Michael Earls, S.J. *Ave Maria*. October 6th.
- The Efficacy of Prayer. By Rev. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. *Irish Rosary*. September.
- Relation of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to the American Board of Foreign Missions. By Most Rev. John F. Noll. *Ecclesiastical Review*. October.
- The Divinitarian. By Arnold Lunn. *Sign*. October.
- Now I Ask You, Father Adam. By Helen Walker Homan. *Extension*. October.
- Confessors. By Julester Shradly Post. *Sign*. September.
- Popular Pulpit Fallacies. By Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R. *Ecclesiastical Review*. November.
- Vitanda in Panegyrics. By Right Rev. Msgr. H. T. Henry, Litt.D. *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*. October.